

University of Rhode Island DigitalCommons@URI

Letters (1979)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts and
Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996)

1978

Letters (1979): Correspondence 41

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_42

Recommended Citation

"Letters (1979): Correspondence 41" (1978). *Letters (1979)*. Paper 41.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_42/41

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Letters (1979) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.



POPULAR CULTURE ASSOCIATION

August 28, 1978

President
CARL BODE
English Department
University of Maryland
College Park MD 20742

Secretary-Treasurer
RAY B. BROWNE
Bowling Green University
Bowling Green OH 43403

Dear Joe (if I may):

Last year we talked a bit about the study of popular culture and its relation to the NEH. Could I return to the topic and make a few points?

1) Though it's dull to do so, I ought to start by proposing a rough working definition. Popular culture is the embodiment of the attitudes and tastes of average Americans, as opposed to high culture, which embodies the more elevated tastes. I should add that high culture is much more evident in tastes than in attitudes.

2) Both fields are worth study. In popular culture the yield is more in social information than in esthetics. In my opinion the study of popular culture is not only a proper end in itself but a very helpful instrument for understanding the American people.

3) The NEH, up to the beginning of the Carter administration, was primarily if not exclusively interested in supporting projects and persons in the field of high culture. In recent months there's been a shift.

4) The shift hasn't been greater, I'd guess, because the study of popular culture is still regarded with mild condescension in academic circles, where it's seen mostly in terms of Batman comics or beer-bottle advertising. This attitude doubtless affects the NEH through its advisors if not through its staff.

5) To advance the study of popular culture, I propose more of an exchange of views and information between the NEH and students of popular culture than we've had before.

6) I suggest that for this exchange the PCA is the best vehicle, I'm convinced that we represent a quiet, previously unheeded majority and that the mission of the NEH will be carried out more fully if our views are attended to.

7) Consequently I propose that we hold an exploratory meeting this fall between representatives of the NEH and the PCA.

I look forward to your response.

Faithfully,

I'm writing a parallel letter to Livingston Biddle.